

Last spring Congress vigorously debated the FCC's proposal to relax limits on one company owning many media outlets in a single market. A compromise was reached that fell short of what major corporations wanted.

But now Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Remember when local tv stations aired thoughtful editorials and solicited viewer response to them? That doesn't happen when most local stations are owned by conglomerates. For democracy to flourish here as well as in Iraq, we need more competition, not less.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.